Excellence and Courage in Science Award for Early-Career Women Scientists from Latin American Countries

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Stella Michael, whose pursuit of knowledge and intellectual courage remain a lasting legacy.

Rules for the Excellence and Courage in Science Award for Early-Career Women Scientists from Latin American Countries: 1) a call for the award will be announced on the CIPOA website; 2) The Excellence and Courage in Science Award was established by Professor Despo Fatta-Kassinos in memory of Dr. Stella Michael, to recognize women whose scientific work exemplifies intellectual rigor, originality, and the courage to advance knowledge beyond established boundaries. Presented biennially at CIPOA, this award acknowledges a woman scientist whose research demonstrates outstanding scientific quality, methodological robustness, and meaningful contribution to the advancement of science. In addition to technical excellence, the distinction celebrates intellectual independence, perseverance, and the strength to pursue demanding and innovative research paths. **The recipient of the award will receive a monetary prize of €500**, together with formal recognition during the CIPOA ceremony. By bringing together excellence and courage, the award affirms that impactful science is shaped not only by precision and depth, but also by character and conviction. Through this distinction, Professor Despo Fatta-Kassinos and the CIPOA community reaffirm their commitment to fostering a scientific culture grounded in integrity, leadership, and lasting impact. **About Stella Michael:** Dr. Stella Michael began her scientific journey against many odds, driven by determination, discipline, and a deep belief in the transformative power of knowledge. Through intellectual courage and perseverance, she became a dynamic and fearless researcher, unafraid to challenge assumptions and pursue demanding new directions. She traveled across continents to

advance her expertise and embrace new methodologies, continually expanding her scientific horizons. Her unexpected passing at the age of 37 was a profound loss. Yet her example endures. A lasting reminder to young women researchers that courage, resilience, and dedication can shape a meaningful and enduring scientific legacy; 3) Award Governance and Selection Process: The award is administered in connection with the CIPOA conference. The members of the selection committee will be appointed subject to the approval of Professor Despo Fatta-Kassinos, founder of the award, in consultation with the Chair of the conference and the CIPOA coordinator. The award may be withheld in any given cycle if the nominations received are judged not to meet the level of excellence expected for this distinction or for other justified reasons. The founder also reserves the right to suspend or not confer the award in a given cycle should circumstances, including the availability of funds, make it necessary; 4) Eligibility and Selection Criteria: The award is intended for **women scientists from Latin American countries** whose research exemplifies scientific excellence and intellectual courage. The recipient will be selected based on the following criteria: i) **Scientific excellence, originality, and methodological rigor** of the candidate's research; ii) **Intellectual courage and independence**, demonstrated through pursuing challenging or unconventional research questions; iii) **Perseverance and commitment to demanding scientific questions,** contributing meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge and serving as inspiration for women in science; iv) The award is intended for women scientists from Latin American countries who are at an early stage of their scientific career, including **doctoral researchers and scientists within 5 years of the completion of their PhD**; v) Career interruptions will be taken into consideration; 5) Applications will be evaluated by the selection committee based on three criteria: **scientific excellence, originality, and methodological rigor (40%); intellectual courage and independence**

(30%); and **perseverance and commitment to demanding scientific questions (30%)**. Candidates must demonstrate a high standard of scientific excellence in order to be considered for the award. Evaluation will take into account the candidate's achievements in the context of available research opportunities and resources; 6) Application Materials - Candidates should submit the following documents: i) **Curriculum Vitae** (max. 3 pages), including education, current position, and key publications; ii) Research Summary (max. 1 page) describing the candidate's main scientific contributions, their originality, and their significance for advancing knowledge; iii) **Selected Research Outputs** (up to 2), such as publications that best represent the candidate's work; iv) **Statement on Intellectual Courage and Perseverance** (max. 1 page) describing a specific situation in which the candidate pursued a challenging scientific question, faced significant obstacles, or followed an unconventional research path. The statement should explain the context, the challenges encountered, how the candidate addressed them, and what was learned from the experience; v) **Letter of support** from a supervisor, mentor, or senior scientist familiar with the candidate's work; vi) **All materials should be submitted electronically as a single PDF file.**